



**International
Republican Institute**
Suite 700
1225 Eye St., NW
Washington, D.C. 20005
(202) 408-9450
(202) 408-9462 FAX
Web site: www.iri.org

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I. SUMMARY

The assassination of Prime Minister Rafik Hariri in February 2005 produced a dramatic shift in Lebanon's political dynamic including widespread demonstrations, a political stalemate in parliament and the eventual resignation of pro-Syrian Prime Minister Omar Karami. In the weeks that followed, Western and Arab governments called for the withdrawal of Syrian military personnel from the country, and hundreds of thousands of Lebanese representing all sectarian groups took to the streets, calling for national unity and the conduct of free and fair parliamentary elections. After failing to form a national unity government, Prime Minister Karami resigned a second time on April 13, 2005, and the appointment of caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati paved the way for parliamentary elections in May as demanded by the opposition.

Despite the subsequent withdrawal of Syrian military personnel, a history of outside political manipulation and retention of the Syrian inspired election law suggested the elections would almost surely produce questions about freeness and fairness. To address this weakness, IRI in partnership with the Lebanese Center for Policy Studies (LCPS) and Statistics Lebanon (SL) conducted exit polling that coincided with each phase of Lebanon's four round parliamentary elections. Exit polling helped support the credibility and legitimacy of Lebanon's election process by serving as an additional check on the outcome in the absence of a parallel vote count. Exit polling also provided critical insights to decision makers by examining voter motivations and issue priorities.

II. BACKGROUND

The assassination of Prime Minister Rafik Hariri in February 2005 produced a dramatic shift in Lebanon's political dynamic including widespread demonstrations, a political stalemate in parliament and the eventual resignation of pro-Syrian Prime Minister Omar Karami. The assassination drew the condemnation of Western and Arab governments and catalyzed calls for the withdrawal of all Syrian military personnel from Lebanon, in

accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 1559. In the weeks that followed, hundreds of thousands of Lebanese representing all sectarian groups took to the streets, calling for national unity and the conduct of free and fair parliamentary elections. After failing to form a national unity government, Prime Minister Karami resigned a second time on April 13, 2005, and the appointment of caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati paved the way for parliamentary elections in May as demanded by the opposition.

No sooner had the last Syrian tank crossed back over Lebanon's Bekaa valley however than did old rivalries between disparate anti-Syrian opposition among the country's political class quickly emerge. Having in many ways benefited from the spoils of political power conferred from Syrian manipulation for years, Lebanon's powerbrokers proved all too willing to engage in Damascus-style politicking even in the absence of their Syrian overlords. A source of immediate contention was the law governing the conduct of elections and an amendment passed in September 2004 widely seen as an attempt to undercut Christian representation. The agreement that formally ended the civil war in 1989 created six neutral electoral districts for parliamentary elections corresponding to the country's governorates (*muhafazat*). However, in subsequent years, Syria pressured its Lebanese allies to pass laws which changed the number of districts and gerrymandered borders in order to undermine potential opponents and weaken coalitions of independent candidates.

In an effort to minimize Syrian involvement, a revised electoral law was introduced in parliament in late January 2005. The proposed law divided the country into small electoral districts (*qadas*) along confessional lines with voting based on a majority system. Recognizing that the smaller district system would maximize Christian representation, an alliance of Christian Maronite politicians quickly moved to support the *qada* system and demanded that parliamentary elections be organized in accordance with the new law. Other opposition leaders, however, including Druze leader Walid Jumblatt and heir to the Hariri dynasty Saadeddine El-Hariri, preferred moving forward with the system used for 2000 elections, recognizing that *muhafazat* districting would likely help preserve their own power bases. With pressure mounting to set a timetable for elections, no agreement was reached on adopting a new law, and Prime Minister Mikati's temporary government opted to keep the existing 2000 electoral law. Although viewed as a contentious decision, this move was eventually accepted by the opposition in April in order to hold elections in May as planned.

A history of outside political manipulation and retention of the Syrian inspired election law suggested the elections would almost surely produce questions about freeness and fairness. In the midst of the popular outpouring that followed Hariri's assassination, this source for conflict had the potential to spiral out of control quickly, leading to chaos and even violence with disastrous consequences for democracy. The European Union indicated early on its intent to send international election monitors in support of a free and fair election process. Plans were also developed to field domestic election monitors through the Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE), adding more than 1,000 Lebanese observers on election-day. However, in the absence of a parallel vote count Lebanon lacked independent data on voter behavior and a check on the voting

process that might serve to add an element of independent and objective credibility to the overall process.

To address this weakness, IRI in partnership with the Lebanese Center for Policy Studies (LCPS) and Statistics Lebanon (SL) conducted exit polling that coincided with each phase of Lebanon's four round parliamentary elections. Exit polling helped support the credibility and legitimacy of Lebanon's election process by serving as an additional check on the outcome in the absence of a parallel vote count. Exit polling also provided critical insights to decision makers by examining voter motivations and issue priorities.

III. QUARTERLY ACTIVITIES

Exit Polling Implementation

In preparation for the first ever election exit polling to be conducted in Lebanon, IRI staff and international polling consultant Dave Williams traveled to Beirut in late May to review polling methodologies employed by Statistics Lebanon, fine-tune SL's exit polling sampling techniques and provide assistance and oversight to logistical preparations being undertaken. Staff also discussed with LCPS and SL a strategy for the release of polling results that would both maximize exposure of the exercise, while taking into consideration the sensitivity of Lebanon's pre-electoral environment following the withdrawal of the Syrian military and the first free and fair election in Lebanon in more than a decade. In subsequent meetings, the US Embassy in Beirut expressed concern to IRI about the potential of exit polling to prejudice the outcome of the election, especially since the election process would be carried out over four rounds as opposed to on one day. Although, IRI was and remains confident that exit polling serves to lend added credibility and legitimacy to the process, as opposed to drawing its outcome into question, it was agreed with the US Embassy that additional precautions would be taken in light of Lebanon's sensitive political climate. A compromise was reached whereby outcome related results of exit polling would not be released until all four rounds of the election had been completed.

Although little time was allowed for pre-election assistance to LCPS and SL given the commencement of the first round of elections on May 29th, IRI and SL were prepared to conduct fieldwork for the first round of polling as a result of two prior assessment and program development trips to Lebanon by IRI staff and consultants (utilizing IRI NED program development funds). In the course of these initial visits, details of the poll sample, as well as sampling techniques to make the survey a self-administered exercise by voters, thereby ensuring ballot secrecy, were worked out. These visits allowed IRI and SL to focus on final modifications to the sampling protocol during the week prior to the first round of balloting. IRI staff and consultant Dave Williams worked with SL staff to train field supervisors on May 26th, followed by training with a core group of fieldworkers on May 27th.

The first round of voting and exit polling was held on May 29th in Beirut and its surrounding environs. SL's field operation included more than 78 fieldworkers and 14

field supervisors supported by SL's central office. The first round included a sample of 4,648 voters covering 24 polling stations in and around Beirut. This wide spread of polling station coverage, combined with the large sample taken on election-day, helped build increased confidence in the sample, especially with the distinct possibility of there being significant differences in voting behavior between the current and most recent past election.

The second round of balloting took place on June 5th in the south of the country and presented much more challenging logistical dynamics to exit polling. With polling stations spread out over a much larger geographic and primarily rural area, the second round of balloting required a larger number of both field workers and supervisors to gather the necessary sample. A total of 134 fieldworkers and 22 supervisors took part in the exercise. A total sample of 4305 voters was gathered covering 22 polling stations throughout the south of Lebanon.

The third round which took place in both Mount Lebanon and portions of the Beka'a Valley on June 12th and which was anticipated to be the most closely contested in the country, presented even more challenging logistical circumstances. More than 40% of Lebanon's electorate was eligible to take part in this round of balloting, necessitating a larger sample, more fieldworkers and a larger number of polling stations (44) over a large geographic area. The isolated nature of some villages on Mount Lebanon also made this particular round challenging with respect to the timely collection and coding of data. A total of 270 fieldworkers and 23 field supervisors took part in the exercise to collect a nearly 9000 voter sample (4719 in Mount Lebanon; 4273 in the Beka'a).

The fourth and final round took place in the north of the country on June 19th. A total of 4846 voters took part in the poll which was carried out by 142 fieldworkers and 13 field supervisors at 28 different polling stations.

Statistics Lebanon utilized a variety of innovative techniques over the course of the four rounds to expedite the transmission of data back to centralized field locations and on to headquarters. In the numerous public opinion polling projects IRI has been involved in around the world, few local partners have demonstrated the innovation or sophistication demonstrated by SL. Data transmission techniques included, the use of GIS (geographic information system) mapping developed internally by SL to allocate electoral zones and identify polling stations within each zone. Use of this technology helped SL to develop a sampling methodology that eventually resulted in accuracy rates that tracked at 99.2% with official results released by the government. GPS technology was additionally used to identify routes used by fieldworkers and supervisors. Finally, the use of VHF transceivers between central headquarters, coordinators, logistics teams and supervisors helped ensure unfettered communications between SL staff and the field and facilitated the quick data transmission back to SL's central system for coding.

Exit Polling Results

IRI supported exit polling in addition to providing a check on the election's eventual

outcome was conducted to provide valuable information about the motivations and priorities of Lebanese voters during the country's first free and fair elections conducted in more than a decade. To that end, the LCPS/SL exit polling questionnaire included a series of questions outside the primary focus of exit polling, namely to who people voted for (Attachment A). Answers voter profile related questions yielded the following results:

- A majority of voters, by wide margin, indicated they made their decision on which candidate/candidate list they would vote for several months before the election. This finding seems consistent with political events in March and April 2005, following the assassination of Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri in February, at a time when Lebanon was going through a popular upheaval. Feelings of national pride and unity that had not been demonstrated for many years were at a high, as was political consciousness.
- Seemingly contradictory to the above finding, an overwhelming majority of voters also indicated they made their decision to vote for a candidate/candidate list based on political platform. In fact, few of the political factions had presented detailed platforms months before the election. Voter identification with a particular party or candidate, thus likely revolved around perceived platform- likely perceived as opposition or "loyalist" within the Lebanese context. The impact of confession and clan also undoubtedly had an impact on voter preference though the sophistication of the electorate may have resulting in a self-censoring response to this question.
- Polling exhibited a strong sense of democratic consciousness and citizenship, irrespective of geographic region of the country. When asked about what their primary motivation for voting was, voters indicated either "my democratic right," or "my duty as a citizen," by an overwhelming majority. Interestingly, "duty as a citizen" was most often cited as reason for voting in Beirut and the South, while "democratic right" was most often cited in Mount Lebanon, the Bekaa, and the North, by a slight margin.
- An overwhelming majority of Lebanese voters (between 65-75% depending on round) believe the country is moving in the right direction (moving toward the better).
- An overwhelming majority (just below 90%) also believe the 2005 parliamentary elections were free and fair.
- Most voters indicated they cast their ballot for a complete candidate list.
- There is not consensus on what the priorities of the new Lebanese government should be. Creating jobs and limiting immigration; national reconciliation; political reform; judicial reform; combating corruption; and other, were all listed as priority choices. Jobs, national reconciliation generated the largest number of

responses. Political reform and combating corruption also generate higher responses. While there appears to be trends that can be discerned about voter priorities depending on region, other factors such as gender, confession, age etc. also weigh heavily on voter responses.

* Note: Election outcome related results were not announced publicly in the initial release of results at the request of the US Embassy in Beirut.

It was originally planned that exit polling results would be released at high profile press conferences conducted after each round. As a result of the decision to not release outcome related results until the completion of all four rounds, press conferences for the third and fourth rounds were not held. Instead, LCPS and SL are planning a post-election exit polling roundtable at which results presented above, as well as outcome related results, will be shared with the press, civil society, opinion shapers, newly elected officials and others.

In the absence of press conferences, LCPS and SL were nonetheless able to generate media attention for the exercise. LCPS was successful in securing exclusive spots in An-Nahar the most widely distributed Lebanese daily on two occasions (Attachment B). Exit polling results also generated media coverage as follows:

- Brief appearance and sharing of preliminary results on Sunday night May 29 on NTV live (Satellite and local);
- Brief appearance and sharing of preliminary results on Sunday night June 12 on LBC live (Satellite and local);
- Extensive discussion for one hour on Al-Hurra satellite TV for the four rounds of elections on June 23rd.
- Two brief interviews on June 5 and June 12 on Radio Voice of Lebanon to share polling results and give forecasts.

IRI believes that were outcome related results shared after each round as originally envisioned, LCPS/SL exit polling would have generated far media attention including in the international media. Because exit polling is a new phenomenon in Lebanon, appreciation for the value of exit polls will also likely improve among the Lebanese press in future elections.

A complete presentation of exit polling results will be released at the post-election exit polling roundtable in the coming quarter (Attachment C).

IV. RESULT

Result: The capacity of Lebanese institutions to conduct high quality public opinion polling will improve through the successful conduct of election exit polling.

Indicator 1) Statistics Lebanon and LCPS will successfully organize and field exit polling coinciding with Lebanese parliamentary elections.

Exit polling conducted by Statistics Lebanon and LCPS yielded results of 99.2% accuracy when compared to official outcome related results released by the Lebanese government.

In the course of conducting the exit poll SL utilized a variety of innovative methods for sample development and data transmission including: use of GIS (geographic information system) mapping developed internally by SL to allocate electoral zones and identify polling stations within each zone; use of GIS technology helped SL to develop a sampling methodology; use of GIS technology to identify routes used by fieldworkers and supervisors; use of VHF transceivers between central headquarters, coordinators, logistics teams and supervisors helped ensure unfettered communications between SL staff and the field and facilitated the quick data transmission back to SL's central system for coding.

As the first exit polling ever conducted in Lebanon, the project revealed practical application of new technology developed by SL strengthening the capacity of the partner to conduct survey research of similar quality in future elections and applying the same techniques to issue based polling.

Indicator 2) Government officials, political parties, civil society, and the public will better understand the value and limitations of polling through widespread media coverage.

LCPS and SL were able to secure two exclusives in the Lebanon's most widely circulated daily newspaper, An-Nahar (Attachment B).

Additional media coverage was generated as follows:

- Brief appearance and sharing of preliminary results on Sunday night May 29 on NTV live (Satellite and local);
- Brief appearance and sharing of preliminary results on Sunday night June 12 on LBC live (Satellite and local);
- Extensive discussion for one hour on Al-Hurra satellite TV for the four rounds of elections on June 23rd.
- Two brief interviews on June 5 and June 12 on Radio Voice of Lebanon to share polling results and give forecasts.